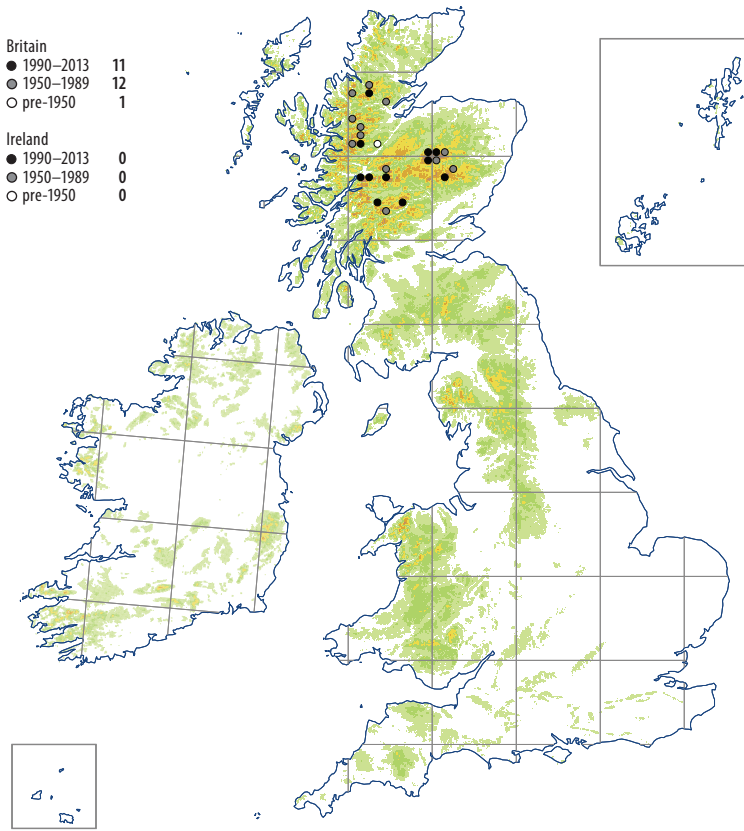


# Polytrichastrum sexangulare



A distinctive moss of the high mountains in Scotland where it is restricted to areas where snow patches persist into the summer. Here it is most frequent on areas of gravel associated with the snow patches, often where there is irrigation during snow melt or on the sides of meltwater channels; some populations in this habitat in the Cairngorms can be very large. It also occurs at the base of crags and low ledges and also in the interstices of block scree, where snow accumulates during the winter. It forms a distinctive community with *Kiaeria starkei* (NVC community U11, the *Polytrichastrum sexangulare*-*Kiaeria starkei* snowbed), and other common associates include *Salix herbacea*, *Barbilophozia floerkei*, *Cephalozia bicuspidata*, *Marsupella brevissima*, *Moerckia blyttii*, *Nardia scalaris*, *Pleurocladula albescens*, *Andreaea nivalis*, *Ditrichum zonatum*, *Kiaeria falcata*, *Oligotrichum hercynicum*, *Pohlia*

*ludwigii* and *Racomitrium heterostichum*. Altitudinal range: 750–1140 m.

Diocous; capsules are occasional but sometimes abundant, and they seem very palatable to Ptarmigan.

European Arctic-montane. Occurring in Iceland, the Faeroes, Svalbard and Fennoscandia, south to the higher mountain ranges of C and S Europe, reaching the Pyrenees, Apennines and Balkan mountains; Caucasus, Urals. Siberia, Russian Far East, Japan. Aleutians, northern N America (south to Utah) and Greenland.

G.P. Rothero

